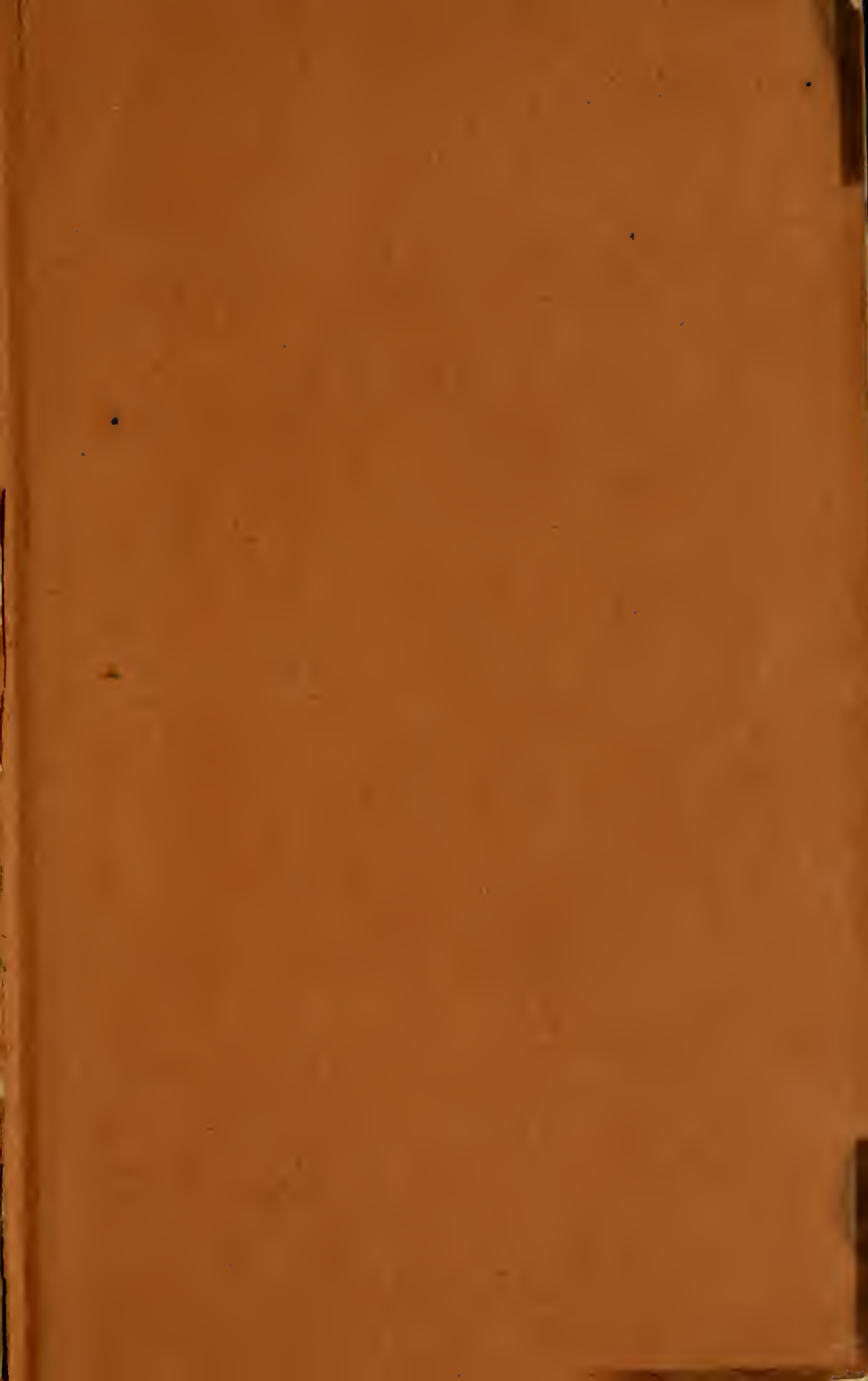






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The Leaven of the Kingdom of God ;

OR,

CHRISTIANITY LEAVENING COMMON
LIFE AND CONVERSATION.

A S E R M O N,

BY THE

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PREFACE.

WHEN so many sermons are published, it requires some good reason to justify the publishing of another. My reason for doing so is, that I am deeply persuaded that the main truth I have endeavoured to enforce—namely, the obvious and undeniable one, that Christianity ought to be the leaven of all our common life and opinions, is strangely forgotten and practically, though often quite unconsciously, denied by many, and that that forgetfulness is at the root of all the evils, under which nations and society are, at this time, suffering. If true Christianity did leaven all our education, all our science, all our politics, we should be safe and blest of God. But men have learnt to think that religion and common life are separate from one another, and that the object of our BLESSED LORD's coming and of God's Revelation was only to enable us to become holy, and like God in some respects—that is, with respect to what they think are the only *spiritual* things; but that the common work and common thoughts and pursuits of this life have nothing to do with God, and cannot have any heavenly light upon them. But we are taught, on the contrary, in the Bible, that when God had created *this* world at first, “HE saw *everything* that HE had made, and behold it was *very good*.” And even now, though it is true that the world is fallen and under a curse, yet St. Paul clearly tells us, “There is *nothing* unclean *of itself*”—nothing that *need* be unclean, or that *has not a good use* if we can find it out. God created everything; Satan cannot possibly create anything; he can only pervert what was originally good, even as he himself was not originally wicked, but an archangel, created to dwell in God's presence for ever. All evil is Satan's caricature of some Divine original. All things we see might be glorious and beautiful; for they all originally came from God, not from Satan, perfect and beautiful for their purpose. And it is the office, CHRIST has told us, of the Blessed Spirit, to make us see and feel how this is the case with every-

thing. For He is "to take *all* things that the Father and the Son have," (that is, all things that ever were created,) "and show them unto us"—make us see them in their true light as God intended them to be.—(See John xvi., 13—15.) And in the second Adam we are to regain all that in the first we lost—and to "sit together in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 5.)

By forgetting these fundamental truths men have learnt contentedly to leave their common life unblest. Their opinions and ways of thinking and feeling on common subjects are lighted with no Heavenly light. Human life and the world, and its marriages, births, deaths, politics, daily joys and sorrows, are thought to have become, by a melancholy necessity, in their very nature, low earthly things, which cannot be made beautiful or heavenly, nor salted with any salt to keep them from corruption. Angels who live in 'Heaven may, they think, be like God, and so may we, if we can become like angels, and separate from the earth ; but so long as we are engaged in earthly cares and thoughts we must be "of the earth earthy"—not made in God's image at all. This is to forget that great truth taught us at this season (Christmas)—the truth namely, that the Son of God lived a common man's life, for the very purpose of showing how the "fulness of the Godhead" may shine through the whole of it, and make birth, and marriage, and death, and everything, beautiful and heavenly—as God is willing always to make them.

In the following Sermon I have endeavoured to point out a test or means of self-examination, by the use of which we may discover how far this has been the case with us, and how far our habitual opinions and feelings are leavened with Christian leaven.

I have endeavoured to express my meaning in language plain enough for the simplest, and I hope the thoughts may, through the blessing of God, be useful to all.

Hagley, December, 1851.



S E R M O N.

Matthew xiii., 33.—“ANOTHER PARABLE SPAKE HE UNTO THEM: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO LEAVEN, WHICH A WOMAN TOOK, AND HID IN THREE MEASURES OF MEAL, TILL THE WHOLE WAS LEAVENED.”

THE words “the Kingdom of Heaven” in this passage may be taken to mean the Gospel and its power and governing influence in men’s hearts. Our Lord says that this power is like “leaven,” or, as we commonly, in this country, call it, “barm,” which a woman put into meal till the whole was “leavened.” For as leaven, though hidden in one part of the meal, yet, by degrees, leavens, not one part only, but the whole of it, so true religion, or living faith in CHRIST, though hidden in a man’s heart, yet gradually transforms, not only what is commonly called his directly “religious” character, but his *whole* temper, words, thoughts, and feelings.

Of this truth, the course of our Church services may remind us. For while, from Advent to Trinity Sunday, the Church speaks of the great points of faith, in the Sundays after Trinity, on the other hand, she speaks of the *fruits* of faith—its effects upon the whole life and character, as seen in the example, and in the Divine Parables and precepts of our LORD and His Apostles. From Advent to Trinity, we see passing before us, in the Church services, as in a glorious procession, all those great truths unveiled in the Bible about God and Man, Life, Death, Time, and Eternity, which are and must be

true for ever, whether we will believe them or not ; but from Trinity to Advent we are to consider the effects produced upon a man's life by really believing these truths, and making that belief a living part of himself. For he who, by faith, lives in all his common life, as in the presence of these sublime and wonderful truths, can no more be the same as other men, than the face of Moses was like the face of other men, after he had been with God upon the Mount. His face, it is said, then "shone" with a Divine glory ; and so will a Christian's *life*—his words and works, his spirit and tone of mind—shine with something of a heavenly glory, if he has indeed the presence of God's spirit in his soul, and faith in God, as manifested in CHRIST, ruling his thoughts and feelings. If a man "*behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"* Now, the point in this great truth, to which I wish now to draw your especial attention, is this—that such faith in God, through CHRIST, and by His Spirit, will not only fill us with hopes of glory *after death*, and in the *next* world, but will also shew us how *this* world was made by God "very good," and how our *present* life may be blest in all its parts. The great truths taught us from Advent to Trinity Sunday are the heavenly leaven committed by God to the Church, wherewith she may leaven all our thoughts about *this* world as well as the next ; and obedience to the practical precepts and the Divine example of our LORD, of which we read from Trinity Sunday to Advent, is the sign whereby we may know whether that leaven has been received by us into our hearts, and whether it is really working in our *common life*, and making all our thoughts, opinions, ways of thinking and feeling, savour of it. For if the "Kingdom of Heaven" is within us it will leaven *the whole* of our characters. Let us examine how this is with us.

Now first, it is important to observe, that this leaven is said here to be "*hidden.*" Those who have

most of it within them are, very often, not those who *say* most about it; but very often those who *show* very little and make very few professions, but whose belief is seen in action, spirit, and temper. Some who come not near so often as they ought to Church, and therein commit a sin, are yet much more truly under the practical influence of faith than some of those who do come constantly to Church, and are full of much so-called religious talk. For all outward professions and outward ceremonial acts, may quite easily be seen in one whose whole life, words, and feelings, are of a totally different complexion; and may be only like a patch of one kind of cloth on a garment whose whole texture and substance is of a totally different kind. But it is, my brethren, the texture and substance of the *whole* garment, not the patches that are on it—it is the *habitual* state of our mind and life, not the exceptional and occasional feelings in them—it is the leaven that leavens and gives its savour to the *whole* of our character—it is this, depend upon it, which really makes the difference in the sight of God. Our *whole* life shews what we are, not any one part of it only; and, therefore, if a man is become a real Christian, the Bible says “he is a new creature,” or more literally “a new creation.” “Old things are passed away, behold *all* things are become new.”* He sees everything in a new light, and being “spiritual,” judges† of *everything* on new principles, and weighs it, as with new balances. Though Christianity, therefore, in one respect, is a *hidden* leaven, yet in another it works visibly, that is, in giving its character and tone to the whole outward and inward life. Let us seriously consider, then, now, in the sight of God, how far our faith is thus leavening our whole character. In doing so, we shall find an excellent and admirable guide in the Prayer Book, which draws all its wisdom from the Word and Spirit of God.

Now, the Prayer Book teaches, in a very forcible and striking manner, that religion has to do with our

* II. Cor. v., 17.

† Cor. ii., 15.

whole life. For it has *religious services* about *all* the great events of life. If a child is born it gives us a *Baptismal Service*, that is, a form of *prayer* and addresses, setting forth a religious or Christian *view* of what has happened ; if any are to be married, it gives us a *Marriage Service* ; if they are sick, there is a *Visitation Service* ; if they die, there is a *Burial Service* ; if they grow up and are about to enter upon life as grown up men and women, there is the *Confirmation Service* ; and whatever happens, our Church always comes in with her solemn warning. "Remember there is a Christian view and way of thinking and feeling about this, as well as one that is unchristian and worldly ; take care you take that which is Christian." Let us, then, compare these services, and the spirit and way of thinking and feeling taught in them, with the way in which we are commonly in the habit of thinking and feeling on all these events.

I. First, consider the case of a child being born. Is there much Christian leaven in the way we commonly think and speak of this ? When we come into Church, and speak of a child *there*, we say that he is "a child of God, a member of CHRIST, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven ;" and we use that Sacrament which we think we believe assures us that he is really so. Do our common words seem to shew that we habitually think of him so ? Let us consider this.

Now, these words imply that children are called to very high things—that it is possible they may become ever such perfect and glorious beings—that God promises them all beautiful, and pure, and holy, and Christian qualities ; because God the Father loves them, CHRIST died for them, to deliver them from all guilt, and the Spirit of God, that is, the Spirit of all holiness and goodness, will work in them. And if, for these reasons, our hopes for them are great, so also our fears for them must be great also ; for they may perish and be forever lost. Are such thoughts as these, then, the leaven of our feelings about children, not in Church only, but in common life ? Is it not true that many who think themselves really Christians never have any

very earnest hopes or fears about a child—never think of an immortal life, and infinite, terrible powers and responsibilities, and glorious and Divine privileges connected with it? They bring the child, perhaps, to be baptised (or as this has got by many to be called, “to be *named*,” because men have forgotten that baptism and all similar things are more than “matters of names and words”)—they bring it to the House of God to be baptised; but too often that action is totally disconnected with their life—is never remembered or made a subject of prayer afterwards—has no effect at all upon their way of thinking or of acting towards the child at other times. Their religion is not the leaven of their lives in this respect, but a thing entirely separate from them, having no effect at all upon them.

Is such a religion worth anything in the sight of God?—a religion that gives no light of hope to a man’s heart, nor any guidance to his steps in common life—a religion of ceremonies and forms, with which the *heart*, the hopes and fears, the earnest desires and real life of the soul have nothing to do? My brethren, these are serious questions to ask ourselves, for we live in the constant presence of One who sees our hearts, and who will one day sit “as a refiner and purifier of silver,” and try us as silver is tried in the fire; and will judge us, not according to what we seemed to man, nor yet according to the formal acts we went through in the House of God, but according to what we really and habitually *were*—according to the living principles that really guided all our lives—according to that which we really made the light of our hearts in all the common scenes of life. For remember *God is just as truly present with us in common life as He is in Church, and cares just as much for the character of our every-day conversation as He does for that of our prayers.* And to suppose that any words or thoughts can be of the very slightest avail which we use *only* in Church, or *only* in our professions, and which do not leaven our life, is one of the greatest of the delusions of the spirit of falsehood.

II. Again, when young men are grown up to something like man’s age, and are about to begin life for

themselves, how beautiful, but how unlike our common way of thinking of them, is that taught in the Confirmation Service, where we are taught to pray—not that they may be rich, or strong, or great in earthly respects—but that they may be filled with God's manifold and glorious "*gifts of grace, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the spirit of God's holy fear.*" This is the true way of looking at those who stand yet in the glory of their youth—on the threshold of that great "race that is set before us," the race for a heavenly prize—for a place of glory among redeemed spirits. It is a sight to make one *pray*; and the object for which we are to pray is—not that they may become laden with gold and silver—nor yet that their life on earth may be easy, and pleasant, and respectable to the worldly—but that it may be a noble, because a Christian, life; full of all goodness, truth, justice, earnestness, Divine faith, hope, and charity. Is this, then, the leaven of our thoughts and feelings about young men and young women? or is it only a dead form utterly foreign to all our common ways of thinking and acting? If so, we are "yet in our sins;"—still made in the likeness of fallen Adam—in these respects; not yet "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us in righteousness and true holiness."*

III. Thirdly, take the case of a marriage. The Marriage Service—which I believe no one who reads, and seriously considers what it says can help feeling, gives a true view of what marriage ought to be—that service represents marriage as a holy and sacred thing. It calls it "*holy matrimony,*" signifying that, in the sight of God and of all in whom the Spirit of God is, it is a high and sacred state. It was instituted, it tells us, "in the time of man's innocency." It is typical of "the mystical union betwixt Christ and the Church." It is the union of the strong and the weak—of one "made in the image of God," with "*a help meet for him,*" because, like him, in likeness to God; which may be one point which makes it typical of the union of the Great Strong

* Col. iii. 10.

One with weak mankind, who give themselves to Him in holy love. And surely to every one who thinks seriously the sight of a marriage is holy and beautiful —The man and the woman both were originally, as I have said, “made in the image of God.” They are not merely animals living here below for a time, but immortal spirits, “children of God, members of CHRIST, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.” They come “in the sight of God and the congregation” to give themselves one to another, as loving, devoted companions to their life’s end. In that solemn moment they think of all that life is. Mention is made of its dangers, troubles, and storms, as well as of its happiness and sunshine; and the two take each other for companions, and mutually-supporting, loving friends, and much more than friends—“for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death them do part, according to God’s holy ordinance, and thereto they plight each other their troth.” And then, after other becoming ceremonies, the Minister of God pronounces them to be “man and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” All this, my brethren, we cannot help feeling to be holy, reverent, and true. If there is any truth or trustworthiness in our nobler instincts—if man is more than an animal, and life more than a foolish puppet-show—if we have in us the thought of God, and the recollection that we have souls that ever stand before Him—then, I say, such thoughts and feelings *must* belong to the entering upon that “*holy estate which Christ adorned and beautified with His presence, and first miracle which He wrought in Cana of Galilee.*” And the children that are to be born are to be looked upon as gifts of the great “Father of Spirits,” “an heritage and gift that cometh from the LORD,” to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the LORD, and to the praise of His Holy Name.

And further, if all this is a true view of marriage, then we see the beauty and truth of the words in which our Church tells us that “it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other both in prosperity and adversity;”

and of those, also, in which St. Peter reminds them that they are so to live together that "*their prayers be not hindered*," evidently meaning thereby to shew that they are to have *religious* communion and fellowship—that they are to *pray* together, and for one another, and to have communion of spirit in prayer. The general spirit and meaning of all this we cannot but feel to be right and good. But now, if with our minds filled with such high and blessed thoughts, we turn to listen to the common talk of the great mass of Christians about marriages that are to take place, would it not make St. Paul, or any like him, almost weep to perceive the greatness of the contrast? So high is that heavenly pattern; so sadly earthly, poor, and low is the world's talk. If any one, like Moses, came down from the Mount with these thoughts on marriage in his mind, and then heard the talk of God's baptised people, I think he would be inclined, like Moses, to break the tables on which they were written; for how should such men be fit to hear of such truths? Must not CHRIST, looking out of heaven, still say too often of us—"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you—how long shall I suffer you."*

For what is marriage according to men's common talk? A marriage, according to the creed which men say—not within the walls of the Church, but when speaking "out of the abundance of their hearts" in the world—a marriage, I say, is a kind of common-place arrangement between two persons, in respect to which the *first and uppermost* thought, (naturally in such a view of it,) relates to money; the next, perhaps, to family or rank, and the names given in the world, which have nothing whatever to do with real worth or excellence; and the next, probably, to the suitability of their natural tempers to make one another happy on earth; and certainly the *last* of all the thoughts is their suitability to enjoy communion of spirit in pursuing godly and Christian objects, and in seeking the everlasting and spiritual blessings of God. As to marriages, few seem even to have learnt that

* Matt. xvii. 17.

simplest of all lessons, that it is not earthly riches but real affection that can give any real happiness, even on earth ; or of how infinitely "*better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.*"* Even the commonest observation of life might teach us that it is the state of the *affections*, not the food, or the dress, or the honours of the world, that constitutes that real happiness on which alone a man can really *live*. Perhaps the chief use of sufficient riches is to set us free from the necessity of thinking about riches ; and, perhaps, the chief use of an established rank in the world is to set us free from all small thoughts and cares about rank. But if few seem to know or feel even so much as I have now said, how much fewer still are they who habitually think of marriage in respect to *God*, or who see that the true and only lasting and indestructible ground of happiness in it is—not earthly wealth or honours—nor yet even mere earthly affection, friendship, or mutual love of each other—but rather *the common love of God existing in both* ; community of feeling and purpose, not so much in love of each other as in love and devotion to God as the Creator, Saviour, Guide, and Sanctifier of both—ever present in time and eternity—on whom both can evermore rest—in whom both can be now and for ever one.

O, may God grant that such thoughts, so beautifully taught in that Marriage Service which God has set up as a standing witness of what marriage ought to be—a standing protest against Satan's mockeries and the world's heartless follies about it—may more leaven our thoughts and feelings about all marriages, and deliver us from ail blasphemies of thought and deed against what is indeed, in the sight of God and of all who are taught of God, "a holy thing."

IV. Further, take the case of a death, and the way in which the Prayer Book would lead us to think and feel about this.

Few, I suppose, can read the Burial Service without feeling that what it says is true and beautiful. It gives

* Prov. xv. 17.

a view of death which we all feel to be the true and right and Christian view. Is this, then, the view we commonly take of it when we think or speak of a death, not in Church or on Sundays, but in our common life? Are our common thoughts and feelings upon such events of the same, or of a quite different character and spirit from our Church thoughts? The way to ascertain how this is with men in general is to consider—if a man dies, do most men, on hearing of it, speak of the death at all in the spirit and tone of that beautiful and Christian service?

Now, I do not mean by this that we ought, necessarily, immediately to speak of God and Providence, and of those most sacred and solemn subjects of which the Burial Service which we read in the House of God directly speaks. To do so always would be very dangerous, because there is such a thing—and all men who are really in earnest, and know themselves and God, feel that there is—as taking God's name and other holy names *in vain*,—speaking of Him in what is called a *canting*, that is, an insincere, unreal way, in words that come from the lips and not from the heart, that are unnatural and forced, and therefore hypocritical. And moreover our SAVIOUR warns us against “casting pearls before swine, or that which is holy to the dogs”—that is, against speaking of holy things to men whose state of mind will only lead them to blaspheme against them, or “turn again and rend you.”* Subjects of which it may be always safe and right to speak in Church, or wherever men are, so to say, in a Church state of mind,† *i.e.*, in a serious and reverent state of mind, may be very unsuitable at other times

* Matt. vii., 6.

+ This appears to be the meaning of our Saviour's words in Matthew xii., 5—6: He says, that just as work might be done even on the Sabbath, *in the Temple*, because God's special presence there made all things holy, so when He—“God manifest in the flesh”—was present *anywhere*, any work might also be done, even on the Sabbath-day. And so, surely, we may also say, that when He is, as truly, though only *spiritually*, present to our souls, all work becomes holy—as holy as if it were done in God's temple, and before the Sheehinah. For the true

and places. For these reasons, a truly religious man is, I believe, generally speaking, rather slow to use sacred words, for fear he should use them hypocritically, or on occasions and in a state of mind, in himself or others, which would make it profane to use them. In this, too, therefore, true religion is often a *hidden* leaven.

But the question is, *is it a leaven at all?* Has true Christian faith any effect at all upon the way in which, in common life, men feel and speak about a death? Is their tone and manner of feeling and speaking on such subjects at all different from what it would be if there was no such thing as revealed truth at all, if CHRIST had never died for sin, and never brought "life and immortality" and hell and judgment, "to light through the Gospel?" I fear, my brethren, with respect to most men, we must say that religion does not affect their talk or manner of feeling about it at all. When any one dies, and we go about the world and hear the world's talk on what has happened, what do we hear commonly said? Some such sayings as these:—"What did he die *worth*?"—meaning by this expression, "how much money had he?" For a man's "*worth*" among men is often reckoned by the amount of *money* he has; as if there was nothing better or nobler, or more worth thinking of and loving in a man, than what he *has*, not what he *is*. So they talk, and are inclined first of all to think, about his riches. "What becomes of his property?" "Who is his heir?" All these are questions that might very naturally be asked in their proper place and time; but surely it is strange that in a Christian they should be the *first* thoughts and *uppermost* enquiries.

Shechinah—that eternal thing "not made with hands," of which the cloud of glory in the "tabernacle which *was* made with hands," and which therefore belonged only to one time and place, was the type—is the Spirit of God, present in God's living temple, a regenerate Christian heart "Where that Blessed Spirit is, *there is liberty*"—"all things become pure." But where He is not present in the heart, even though it be in the Church, no work, even there, can be holy—"To them that are defiled and unbelieving is *nothing pure*; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."—II. Cor. III., 17.—Titus I. 15.

Or again, with a feeling in which certainly there is a great mixture of good, we say of the dead, "Poor man," pitying him. Often we are not so ready to pity his family and those he left behind him, as to pity the dead himself. Certainly, in one way, it is not only natural but right to pity the dead, even those who are saved, that is, in respect to the actual *dying*.* For death is intended to be awful—it is "the wages of sin"—it would never have come upon man, at least in its present form, if it had not been for sin; and, therefore, Elijah and Enoch, whom God saw to be in a rare degree holy, were altogether spared death. Death, then, is the shadow cast by God's wrath upon sin, the passage through it is called "the Valley of the Shadow of Death," meaning that it is dark and somewhat terrible. But *after* death the saved are in Paradise. Therefore, when we think of those whom we have loved, and who, we have reason confidently to hope, are saved, it surely ought to be unnatural to us to speak of them now, or for a moment to think of them, except as blessed. If we do so, it must be from a great want of reality and vividness in our faith. Yet it is very commonly done. So that these two feelings seem to be those most commonly connected with the dead in men's minds, pity for them, and thought about their riches.

Now, with this contrast the Burial Service—which we all acknowledge to be true as well as beautiful, only it is often so unreal, so unpractical, and so seldom present to our minds. That says—"*I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours;*" and, as the Bible adds—"*Their works do follow them.*"†

* Another, perhaps, more probable origin of the use of the expression "poor," with respect to the dead, is a certain natural tenderness of feeling towards them. When our relation to the dead was not close enough to justify expressions of actual affection for them, we yet are driven to seek some other word expressing at least tenderness. In this way, such a phrase is, no doubt, harmless or good—a preservative against harshness and coldness.

† Rev. xiv., 13.

They are gone *to give account of their works* ; their works, therefore, or in other words, what they *were*, or did, not what they *had*, is the main thing to think of. For it is the only thing they have carried with them where they are gone ; it is the only thing that ever seriously mattered in the sight of God, and of all in whom God's Spirit is. Now, my brethren, have we heard that "voice from heaven?" Have we really believed that it is a "voice from heaven," and therefore true, as God is true, the most certain of all certain things? Is this blessed truth, the light of our souls, *always and everywhere*, or only in Church and at sacred hours? If so, surely it must sound in our hearts, whenever we hear or think of a death ; and then I do not say we shall always quote it directly, but it will have an effect upon our words. It will be as *leaven* leavening all our thoughts and feelings about death. And if it does not do so — if it has no effect upon our common way of thinking and speaking, what does this shew, but that, in respect to this subject, our faith is a dead faith—a faith of times and places—a faith that we can put on sometimes like a dress, but which, like a dress, too, does not manifest, but hides our real selves—a faith that is no living part of our selves, and which, therefore, cannot be of any avail in the sight of Him who "searcheth the heart and trieth the reins."

It would be easy to carry on this kind of reflection through all the events of daily life ; to compare our habitual way of thinking of sickness with that taught in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick ; our common view of ordination with the Ordination Service ; of coronation with the Coronation Service ; of kingdoms, nations, kings, magistrates, politics, and what they ought to be, with our prayers in the Litany and elsewhere ; and to show by this means how often, not faith and love of God, and of man in God and for God, but unbelief, worldliness, heartlessness, and selfishness, are the leaven leavening all our thoughts.

And leaving particular instances, let us further ask ourselves how far the central truths unveiled in the Bible altogether are the leaven of our habitual feelings.

Could any one perceive, from seeing us in our daily lives, that we had within us the real belief in an universal judgment, in which "God will judge the world in righteousness"—of an eternal heaven and hell, towards one of which the course of time is ever bringing us and all men nearer—of our LORD, who was the SON of GOD, "God manifest in the flesh," having died upon the Cross for sin—of the eternal and ever-blessed Spirit being at work in us, and in men round us, whom we must, therefore, be always resisting or obeying. Are these thoughts at all the leaven of our daily lives, feelings, and opinions? Do they give at all the tone to our way of thinking of life and death, of what we are, what we shall be, what GOD is? If it is so, our life will show it.* Or, again, do we really look upon CHRIST as the

NOTE ON MIRTH.

* At first sight, when we think of the great awfulness of some of the chief eternal truths unveiled in the Bible, such as those I have mentioned in the text, it might seem that if any one lived by faith as in their constant presence, they must burn out of him all lighter thoughts and feelings, and make him, during all his life on earth, an entirely grave and generally sorrowful man. And it seems that some of the greatest and best men, such as Bishop Butler, Pascal, and others, have been so. And it is true that our BLESSED LORD Himself was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and that we never read of His laughing and only once of His "rejoicing in spirit," but often of His sorrow, and once of His weeping. Is it true, then, that a true Christian ought never to be merry? I think certainly not. I think—as has often been said by Christian writers—we may lawfully be merry. One of the chief ways in which we are to find out whether anything is right or wrong, is by enquiring what good men feel about it. And whatever the instinctive feeling of all good men pronounces to be harmless, I am sure must be so really, and will be found not to be condemned by that Book which is inspired by the same Spirit that inspires and guides *them* so far as they are good, if only that book is rightly interpreted; for on those practical points which conscience settles, our LORD tells us, we are to know true and false teachers by their *fruits*—by their *lives*. If a man's life and feelings are good, we are to believe that, on practical points, his judgement also will, generally speaking, be guided by the same Spirit of GOD, which we see guides his life. Now some of the best of all Christians have been merry and have not felt it to be wrong. We may therefore, I think, be sure it is lawful. What then is the reason it is so? How can merriness or mirth be reconciled with the

“King of Glory?” Do our common lives and opinions shew that we really believe and feel that infinitely the

habitual belief of such awful truths as those of Revelation? Perhaps it is partly because, though as Christians we see more deeply and terribly than others the nature and extent of man's fall, yet we see also far more the greatness and power of God's goodness in CHRIST. God has told us, and we have received it, that “where sin abounded, grace hath *much more* abounded.” Good will in the end prevail and triumph, and so we may, in God's strength, defy the power of evil, yea and laugh and sing in spite of it. And in all the singing of birds, and the sparkling of fountains, and the beauty of wild flowers blossoming over the earth, and in the joy that these give to all living creatures, in all these, we need not fear to say confidently, that the Heavenly Father is ‘graciously inviting us to rejoice. And if we will not rejoice it is to be feared that we are sullen and will not venture to *trust* Him. Every *child* does trust Him and is merry, and so may and ought we to be, for He has told us that “of such” as little children “is the Kingdom of Heaven,” and nothing is more universally characteristic of them than mirth. God is spreading out a feast to which, in His mercy, He invites all creatures and makes beautiful music whereat we are to rejoice. And though our LORD tells us that they that begin by laughing will end in mourning, yet He says that *they that begin by mourning shall end in laughing; we shall have a right to laugh and be merry, when we have first mourned*, as is signified by that ancient custom in our Church of having a vigil or fast before a feast. (See Luke vi. 21 and compare Matt. xi. 17) We are to mourn when we think of ourselves and our sins, but we need not always be thinking of ourselves—Christ has delivered us from ourselves and from the burthen of our sins—and, therefore, oftenest we may go utterly out of ourselves and rejoice in God; and then we may laugh and sing. A Christian is to rejoice evermore, and not only to “weep with them that weep,” but also “to rejoice with them that rejoice” in innocent gladness, with children and men of childlike purity, and the fowls of the air, and all the happy creatures God has made. (See many excellent remarks on this by Archdeacon Hare in the “Guesses at Truth,” first series 3rd. edition, pp. 339—360., from which I have borrowed some of these reflections.)

And our LORD never having laughed (if He never did so) is, as is well said in that book, no more an argument against its being innocent to do so, than His never having married is any argument against marriage. Though He did not marry, yet He was present at a marriage feast and blest it, and created there the wine that God has made “to make glad the heart of man.” And so though He may never have laughed, yet He said that “little children” who are guided by pure instinct rather than by any knowledge or precepts, and whose chief characteristic is innocent mirth, were the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

most glorious being who ever appeared on earth was He who was laid in a manger—who was “hanged upon

But what I mean in the text, is that our real opinions about all things, and the great tendencies and guiding principles of our lives cannot but be earnest, grave, and thoughtful if we have habitual belief in revealed eternal truth. The *groundwork* of our hearts must be earnest, though the surface may be ever so cheerful. In what *direction* are our thoughts travelling? Whither does the road we have chosen point? What is the light by which we are guided in it? If it is the right direction and the right light, no matter how many flowers bloom by the side of it, the more the better, they are God's gracious and merciful gifts which we could not reject without thanklessness. Only let us take care that our mirth be as *innocent* as that of a child and stir as good feelings—be leavened with the Christian leaven of kindness and purity; then it will be a blessing to ourselves and others.

I am glad, in this, to support myself with the great authority of Wordsworth. In his beautiful poem “On the Longest Day,” (in vol. 1, p. 41,) while drawing from the thought of the transitoriness of human life, a lesson of sober-minded thoughtfulness and gravity, and saying to one yet young,

“ Let not flowers and boughs fruit-laden
Hide the knowledge of thy doom.
Now, even now, ere wrapped in slumber,
Fix thine eyes upon the sea,
That absorbs time, space, and number,
Look thou to eternity :”

yet he beautifully allows (as I believe God does) all natural playfulness, saying

“ Laura, sport as now thou sportest
On this platform light and free,
Take thy bliss while longest, shortest,
Are indifferent to thee.
*Who would check the happy feeling
That inspires the linnet's song?
Who would stop the swallow, wheeling
On her pinions swift and strong ?”*

Thus does this great and truly wise man pay a tribute to natural cheerfulness, and ascribe such natural joy to the bounty of Him who takes care that the “lilies of the field” shall be beautiful, and the “fowls of the air” free from anxious care.

So, also, in his poem on “The Kitten and the Falling Leaves,” (in vol. 2, p. 69,) observing how such sights cheer the hearts of children, so he says—

“ That almost I could repine
That your transports are not mine,
That I do not wholly fare,
Even as ye do, thoughtless pair !

the tree" by the condemnation of the world and its great men—who deliberately never shewed (though He might, if He had pleased, have done so) any profound learning, or any of what the world calls "cleverness," but simply and only that which may be often seen in the poorest and simplest, quite as much as in the most learned and cultivated—that is, Divine holiness, mercy, purity, magnanimity, faith, hope, charity? Are these the qualities we

—he continues showing how he thinks he may be as they,

And I will have my careless season
 Spite of melancholy reason,
 Will walk through life in such a way
 That, when time brings on decay,
 Now and then I may possess
 Hours of perfect gladness—
 Pleased by any random toy;
 By a kitten's busy joy,
 Or an infant's laughing eye,
 Sharing in the ecstasy;
 I would fare like that or this,
 Find my wisdom in my bliss;
 Keep the sprightly soul awake,
 And have faculties to take,
 Even from things by sorrow wrought,
 Matter for a jocund thought,
 Spite of care, and spite of grief,
 To gambol with life's falling leaf."

And in that wonderfully beautiful ode, called "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," vol. v., p. 339, after speaking of the joy of all living creatures on a fine day, he continues

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
 Ye to each other make; I see
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
 My heart is at your festival,
 My head hath its coronal,
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all—
O evil day! if I were sullen
While earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling,
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
 And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!

But this is totally different from making mirth and the like the main business or great object of life, or the groundwork of our thoughts or purposes.

honour, love, and delight in more than all else? Is He who showed forth *these* in their highest and most heavenly perfection, indeed to us, the "King of Glory?" If not, we are yet worldly; we have not yet "been crucified unto the world, nor the world unto us;" our ideas of glory are not God's, nor those of heaven and eternity, but this low world's.* Thus, my brethren, does the "troubled sea" of our hearts often "cast up mire and dirt" — foolish, unbelieving, contemptible, unchristian thoughts and sayings.†

What, then, is the practical conclusion? Are we to look through our services and see how they speak, and then straightway try to speak like them? Would this avail anything? No, my brethren, we might as well hang the skins of dead grapes on thorns, or of dead figs on thistles, and then say we had made a living vine and fig-tree. The change must be within, in our whole nature and habitual way of thinking and feeling. We must not try to *talk by new rules*, but we must pray to God to *give us new hearts*; "thou blind Pharisee," said the LORD, "cleanse *first* that which is within, that the outside may be clean also."‡ And whenever the law convinces us of sin in our outward words and works, it ought to make us fly to Him "who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not," to give us, as He alone can, new life. The Bible does not tell us merely that a Christian lives by *new rules*, but it says that he is "*created anew unto good works*."§ God has given him a new nature within, of which the *natural fruits* are "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works;" and the words of a worldly minded man, talking religiously, are no more like those of a real Christian than the skins of dead grapes hung upon a thorn, as I have said, are like living grapes growing on a living vine that God has made. The grapes were beautiful when they were full of the sap and grew fresh on the living vine; but now, when there is but the outside of them left and they are hanging on a thorn,

* See note at the end. † Isaiah, lvii. 20.

‡ Matt. xxiii., 26. § Eph., ii. 10.

with which they have no living connection, they are worthless or worse than worthless. So are religious words when spoken by the worldly, though they might be ever so beautiful when spoken naturally. The perversion of the best things is the worst of all perversion—taking God's name in vain is worse than taking any other name in vain. Above all things let us be perfectly true, never saying one word that is not really entirely natural to us, the true "abundance" or "overflowing of our hearts." If our words shew that our hearts are sinful and unbelieving, let us pray that God may change our *hearts and not our words merely*.* Let us try habitually to think, in a more Christian way, of everything, and to have a more Christian tone of mind. When we look out at the world let us be quite as ready to pray as to talk, and often pray before we talk. Let us not look at this great world, which an infinitely wise and good God made, as if it were a foolish stage-play, or at our fellow-creatures who, the Bible tells us, are immortal spirits on their everlasting journey—our brethren, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, whom we are to love, and care for, and pity as our own selves—as puppets on that stage, fit objects of foolish laughter or heartless indifference ; but let us think of what God intended all this to be, and pray to Him about it. Let us often consider whether our opinions and views of all things are like those taught in the Bible, and pray that God may make them more so.

* This is the practical lesson to be learnt from our Lord's words in Matt. xii., 36, where He says that we shall "give an account, at the day of judgement, for every idle word." This does not, certainly, mean that whenever we speak without careful forethought, we shall be condemned for it; for it is not said that for every idle word we shall be *condemned*, but only that we shall "*give account for it*," *i.e.*, that it will be made one of those things by means of which the great judge will make manifest to us, and to all men, what was the nature and disposition of heart we had suffered to grow up in us. Nothing shews this so clearly as our unguarded words—the true "abundance" or overflowing "of our hearts." And we shall then be judged by what we *are*, quite as much as by what we *wish* to be—by our *nature*, whether it is the "new nature in Christ," or the old in Adam, quite as much as by our principles and rules of conduct.

O, how great would be the blessing if we did this indeed! Surely it would be no mere change in *words*, but in *deeds* also. If, when we looked at men, we remembered what the voice of God has said men were intended to be, and what that same voice has said that He is *willing now to make them*, surely it would grieve us to see what they are—the thought would make us work heartily and hopefully to make men what they should be. O, my brethren, how much we lose by banishing the hope of all God's blessings beyond the grave! Yes, how much we lose by having in us the hope of heaven after death, if it makes us content with earthliness and sin here! Surely, God is God here as well as in the world of spirits! Surely, Satan spoke as “a liar and the father of it,” a “murderer” of souls, as he was “from the beginning,” when he said “the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them” were his by right. Since that time, at any rate, has not Another said—“I saw Satan, as lightning fall from Heaven;” and has He not “spoiled the strong man armed,” bound him, taken possession of his palace, and “divided,” not destroyed, “his goods?”* But the practical force of all these sayings is commonly totally taken away by the delusion that they *can* only belong to another world and a future time, not to the present. If we say—“The kingdoms of the world” are to “become the kingdoms of the LORD and of His CHRIST,”† men, with an “evil heart of unbelief,” answer—“Yes, but that means in the Millennium, which cannot be now.” If we say—“God has promised that the “Tabernacle of God is” to be with “men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and He Himself shall be with them and be their God,”‡ they answer—“That is true; but it means in the new heaven and new earth, wherein is to dwell righteousness,”§ but in *this* heaven and earth sin is always to reign and God never to be. O, miserable perversion of God's life-giving words! O, wretched unbelief, that makes it now, as in Nazareth of old, impossible for CHRIST “to do many mighty works

* John viii., 44., Luke x, 18., and xi, 21, 22. † Rev. xi., 15.

‡ Rev. xxi. 3. § 11. Peter iii, 13.

amongst us,"* not from any want of power or willingness in Him, but from our want of *faith*. Cannot God, my brethren, save in this world as well as any other? Is Satan too strong for Him here? Cannot He overcome him and triumph over him in man and in the world? Has He not once for all shown that He can? and is He not willing to do so in every generation, and in every son of man, as well as in that one generation and that one great Son of Man? Are we not all to be like Him? yea, *one with Him by faith?*

And if there are glorious promises in God's eternal word, let us remember that their fulfilment or non-fulfilment depends upon our faith or unbelief. If we have faith, "*all things are possible to him that believeth,*"† and God's eternal saying now and always, by which He governs eternity and infinity, is "according to your faith be it unto you." The blessings of the Millennium might dawn upon us—the blessings of heaven might begin in us, if only we had faith; "*Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?*"—Luke xviii, 8.

Finally then, my brethren, let us remember that all heavenly visions are intended to encourage us to work out heavenly realities in our daily lives. Whenever we look into heaven we are to pray "Thy will be done *on earth*" as it is there; and if this is really our *prayer*—the deepest wish and longing of our hearts before God (for nothing less is prayer), then surely it must be our constant earnest endeavour also. We must "draw nigh unto God" that "He may draw nigh unto us;" we must strive if we would hope God will help us, otherwise we are but "tempting God." When Moses came down from the mount, where God had shown him "a pattern of heavenly things", he did not remain on earth dreaming of these heavenly things; no, nor yet merely looking forward in hope to the time when he might see them again after death; but he also immediately began to try to build a tabernacle of earthly materials, after that heavenly pattern, which should represent to men these Divine eternal realities. When

* Mark vi., 5, 6. † Mark ix, 23.

St. Paul had been caught up into the third Heaven, and heard "things unutterable," he did not remain a dreamer or a man of hope for the *future* only, but of all the practical men that ever lived—of all those whom God has enabled, not merely to speak of other glorious worlds besides this, but also to show that this world and its commonest things may be made heavenly—he was the most practical and the most successful. How truly has he in Christ's power built up in all nations a temple of living men and Christian societies, fashioned after that heavenly pattern! And if any man now has but his *faith*, he can build up again that temple, so ruined, as beautiful or more so than it ever was.

Let us never, then, be content to sit down here in idleness, and hope only for the Heaven that is to be hereafter; but let us gird ourselves, in God's strength, *to try to make a beginning of Heaven here*—to lift up earth into Heaven. Like Moses and like St. Paul, we must be, each in his own place and calling, missionaries from God to the world, claiming it and all that is in it for God—regaining in the second Adam, the LORD from Heaven, what in the first we lost—"fellow workers with God," and therefore in the end infallibly, so far as we have faith, *prevailing*. So may this Heaven and earth become "a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness,"—at the sight of which new creation, as in the dawn of the old, "the morning stars," and all that God has made, may "sing together" in divine harmony, and we "and all the sons of God" may "shout for joy." Only let not such thoughts pass away like a vision of impossible things—but be ever endeavouring to realise them in your common life, in your own heart, in your family, in your home, in your country, neighbourhood, and parish, so that these may leaven the world round them and the "generations that are yet unborn," and that "the people that shall be born may praise the Lord."

"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end."—*Amen.*

A PRAYER.

O GOD deliver us, we pray Thee, from all low earthly thoughts, and reveal to us Thy glorious purpose in our life. Help us ever to look upon our children as Thy children called to heavenly privileges; upon marriage as a holy estate intended for Thy glory and the salvation of souls; upon death as the gate of glory; upon all our life here as blest by Thee. O LORD GOD! the blessed Spirit, make that light above the brightness of any earthly sun, the light of Thy Divine truth, to shine in our sight over all things, and recall to us what their state was when Thou didst first call them into being, and when Thou didst see everything which Thou hadst made, and behold it was very good. Suffer us not to be worldly or low-minded, but illumine with the rays of Thy heavenly wisdom, the darkness of our sinful hearts, that we may see all things in Thee, and glorify Thee in all, now and for evermore, through Him who lived a man's life, and made it all heavenly and beautiful, Thine Eternal Son our Saviour, who with Thee and the Holy Spirit ever liveth one God world without end.
Amen.

Note to page 22.

What more disgraceful instance of unchristian honour—of men honouring Barabbas instead of Christ—can be imagined than that now seen in France, where by universal suffrage—the free votes of a whole nation—a man is made chief and king, and presented as the object of universal honour to mankind, whose profligacy is notorious, whose low selfishness is manifest to all men, whose sole recommendation is the possession of the bare *name* of another of the Idols of France—one who was great chiefly as a “robber of nations,” and the shameless use of brute force in breaking all law and crushing all freedom? Where is the Christianity of such a nation? How must *they* have been trained in acknowledging Christ as the King of Glory, and all other men as glorious only so far as they are like Him? Or again, what are we to think of the state of a National Church, in which Bishops and leading statesmen, with high reputations for Christian faith, are not ashamed publicly to recommend submission to such a man, in his acts of open defiance of law, robbery, and gross tyranny, because by such acts he is willing to enforce respect to the Church? Surely never was a more gross instance of worshipping Satan, in order to give the kingdoms of the world and their tinsel glory to Christ. Perhaps it may be said that, under the circumstances, it is the least bad thing that can be done. If so, what can be more fearful than the condition of a nation where *this* is the best thing that can be done? The whole

society is become corrupt; the light that is in it is become darkness; the leaven that leavens it is not the Divine leaven of the Gospel, but that of worldliness, selfishness, sensuality, and wickedness; therefore all these miseries—the necessary fruits of sin—come upon it. The Gospel is called the light of the world, the salt that is to keep it from corruption, the leaven that is to leaven all man's life, and how awfully does history and the course of the Divine judgements show that it is so indeed; for if in any nation that light is put "under a bushel," or is not set on a sufficient 'candlestick' so that all who come in may see it, then more and more do we see darkness of every kind covering it. And "if the light that is in it be darkness," if what pretends to be Christianity is, for the most part, some frightful perversion of it, "how great is that darkness!" And if any "body" or society of men is not salted with that salt, how visibly does it decay and become utterly corrupt! "If the salt have lost its savour"—if the teachers and leaders of public opinion in any nation have become worldly—"wherewith shall it be salted?" "It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." He must be blind who does not, by this time, perceive how entirely it is one principle, and one only which "has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come"—namely, real and true Christian faith—one God, one only who in the end rules this as well as all other worlds—namely, God manifest in CHRIST. Where that faith is not, everything sooner or later decays—"it carries within itself the germ of its own dissolution." All spiritual food is useless or poisonous that is not leavened with this; all light is darkness that is not borrowed from and illumined with this. If we would make our education worth anything at all—if we would have teachers who shall do any good and not wide-spreading harm—if we would teach politics in any way that shall not be poisonous—all must be leavened with this leaven of real uncorrupted Christianity. It is not necessary only, or chiefly, that the teachers should be men who profess Christianity as their declared creed, nor yet that the doctrines of the Bible should be taught at times, but the main point is, that true uncorrupted Christianity should be the leaven, leavening the whole character of the teacher, and giving its savour to the whole doctrine taught about everything. This is the sole and only true remedy for all our ills: "this *is* now—just as much as shall be hereafter—"life eternal to know Thee the only true God and JESUS CHRIST whom Thou hast sent." Leaven a nation with this faith and it will come soon to "glory, honour, and immortality;" take away this, or turn the faith which ought to be "leaven, leavening the whole lump"—leavening all politics, philosophy, and wisdom into a dead stone separate from all life—and in the end it will come to sure destruction and shame—to "indignation and wrath, tribulation, and anguish." If men will not believe this by *faith* in God's word, they will be compelled sooner or later to acknowledge it by the *sight* of God's judgements.





